DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 225 268 EA 015 300

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TITLE The U.S.-Australia Education Policy Project: Implications for American Educational Policy.
PUB DATE 81
NOTE 29p.
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070) -- Viewpoints (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Comparative Analysis; Educational Equity (Finance); *Educational Policy; Education Work Relationship; Elementary Secondary Education; *Equal Education; *Faculty Development; Federal Government; Foreign Countries; Gifted; *Governance; Government School Relationship; Postsecondary Education; *Private School Aid; Rural Education; School District Autonomy; Vocational Education
IDENTIFIERS *Australia

ABSTRACT

A review of papers produced by the United States-Australia Education Policy Project identifies implications of Australia's educational policies and structures for U.S. educational policy in the areas of equality, diversity, professional development, and control or governance. In educational equality the author examines, first, fiscal equity, noting Australia's higher level of financial equity and the central role of the Australian Schools Commission; second, decentralized implementation of national policies in Australia; and, third, America's problems in coordinating education and work. Under the issue of diversity, the author discusses public aid to nonpublic schools, which is far larger in Australia, and religious and demographic problems in schools. Also covered under this issue are education for the gifted (in disarray in both countries) and rural education technology and software. The section on professional development describes the confused state of U.S. policy on both the federal and state levels. In considering educational control, the paper contrasts the two countries' political systems and notes both nations' shift toward less centrality in educational governance. The author concludes with eight brief suggestions for U.S. education regarding the Australian Schools Commission, local control over national programs, minority vocational education, religion, gifted and rural education, professional development, and educational policy-making. (RW)

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The U.S.-Australia Education Policy Project: Implications for American Educational Policy

by Stephen K. Bailey

Note: This paper is being published posthumously. In preparing this paper, Stephen Bailey reviewed all of the preliminary project reports of the U.S.-Australia Education Policy Report, some of which (e.g., reports of rural/distance and in-service education) are not published in this volume.

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Introduction

The human mind has a propensity to compare. Actually, in many areas of thought, comparison is the precondition of explicit understanding. Presumably this has been the case since the caveman (that sabre-toothed tiger is smaller than a mammoth but larger than a wild boar; Gork's family has more skins than Dork's family; your club is heavier than my club).

But as intricate cultures have emerged, the arts and sciences of comparison have become caught up in semantic and symbolic complexities unknown to our primitive ancestors. As the American Heritage Dictionary explains, "...similarities are often metaphorical rather than real; the things compared (may be) of fundamentally unlike orders" (Boston: 1975, p. 271).

And yet, without attempts at rigorous comparison, there would be no taxonomy. Without taxonomy there would be no science. Without science there would be no disciplined general principles from which logic could tease reasonable inferences. Without reasonable inferences, creative thought of a rigorous nature would atrophy, the intellectual scaffolding of our culture would dissolve, and civilization as we know it would collapse into a jelly.

The U.S.-Australia Education Policy Project is an exercise in comparison. Scholars from both nations have looked at educational structures, policies, and processes in both Australia and America. Investigators have attempted to explicate the similarities and differences (real and metaphorical) they have observed. Although individual studies deal with fairly discrete topics (e.g., church-state relations, education of the gifted, programs for the disadvantaged, who makes education policy, school administration), the papers that comprise the project tend to reveal

common threads of underlying concerns -- recurring insights that this paper will attempt to identify and briefly explicate in terms of possible lessons for American educational policy makers in the years ahead. These thematic continuities tend to group around four underlying issues: equality, diversity, professional development, and control -- issues that will serve as organizing principles for this present essay.

It could, of course, be argued that Australian experiences in dealing with educational issues of equality, diversity, professional development, and control have no implications whatsoever for American educational policy-making in the years ahead. Separated by the equator and by vast stretches of the Pacific Ocean, the two countries are in many ways as distinct as the Kangaroo and the Bald Eagle. Australia's population is only a fifteenth of the size of the United States. The island-continent has only six state governments. Its constitutional system is Westminster-parliamentary and is dominated by a long tradition of powerful political parties and centralized administrations at both the national and state levels. Traditionally, its most seriously "disadvantaged" population has been small, aboriginal, and generally concentrated in reserves isolated by great distances from the main centers of a highly homogeneous European population. As we shall note below, this fairly simple ethnic pattern is changing, but traditional mind-sets cast long intellectual shadows over the present and the future.

Even in its largest cities, population density in Australia is on the average less than half of that in the major metropolitan areas of the United States. Aside from a few enclaves of fertility along its extended continental littoral, most of Australia is either searing desert or marginal grazing land. There is an enormous gulf between

the comparative wealth and international influence of the two nations.

And yet, the points of at least superficial similarity are impressive. Both nations enjoy a huge continental land mass encompassing vast natural resources. Both populations possess a predominantly British linguistic and cultural heritage. Both nations have a federal structure of government -- i.e., a system wherein a central national government shares governing authority with several quasi-sovereign state governments. The economies of both nations are technologically sophisticated. Physical and economic frontiers have been an essential force in shaping the national characters of both countries. On the average, people in both countries have a high per capita wealth. The political culture in both nations is marked by democratic and civil-libertarian values. Educational premises in both nations are marked by value contradictions and anxieties. There is in both the United States and Australia a strong strain of non-ideological tentativeness in developing and implementing social plans.

It is, of course, essential to recognize that lessons learned or experiments undertaken in one nation may not be applicable in specific terms to policy developments in another -- no matter how obvious cultural and structural similarities seem to be. On the other hand, it would be ridiculous to assume that one band or polity of human beings cannot learn from another. In the modern world of swift transportation and instantaneous communication, cultural diffusion and institutional adaptation are ubiquitous. And the probablity is high that the more two societies have in common, the greater possibility there is of each borrowing innovations from the other successfully. Just as the many states in the American nation have aped and otherwise

profited from policy experiments undertaken in other stages, so, increasingly, nations of a progressively smaller globe are finding it possible to borrow technological and social ideas from each other in the unending struggle to solve intractable and widely shared human problems.

This essay starts, then with the premise that there are in fact many areas of Australian education policy and many aspects of Australian education structure and process that can inform and enrich the educational policy deliberations of the United States over the course of the next two decades. Where direct lessons are less clear, various reports of the U.S.-Australia Education Policy Project have raised provocative issues that warrant consideration and analysis by policy makers in both nations as solutions to common problems are explored in the years ahead.

Issues of Educational Inequality

Much of the history of educational policy in the United States during the past quarter-century can be written in terms of the search for equal chances for children. Courts have struck down school segregation, property-tax disparities, and mono-linguistic educational programs -- all on the grounds that they have deprived children of equal protection of the laws. The United States Congress and large numbers of State legislatures have passed a myriad of education bills aimed at improving the life chances of disadvantaged youngsters -- e.g., children of the urban poor, children who are physically and emotionally handicapped, young "native Americans," and children of agricultural migrants.

It would be quite impossible in brief compass to delineate the uneven effects of these various court decisions and legislative man-

dates. But one generalization stands. Whatever improvements have come about (and many can be identified), the American educational system as a whole continues to be marked by gross inequities. Furthermore, there is considerable evidence that school and community life has been so roiled by governmental attempts to achieve various forms of educational equality that, in many situations, fears have caused a "fight-or-flight" mentality. This in turn, has had perverse and often contra-productive effects upon the implementation of equal-chance laws and rulings, and upon the purveying of educational programs themselves. Educational inequality, in short, has turned out to be a more intractable reality than sanguine reformers in the 1950's and 1960's ever dreamed.

And yet, legal and constitutional commitments remain largely intact. Education fair-shares is more than a piety. Armies of public and educational officials are committed to what Lyndon Johnson once referred to as "overcoming unequal history." In this attenuated struggle, what lessons if any can be learned from Australian experience?

There seems to me to be two lessons: one in the field of fiscal equality; one in the area of decentralized policy implementation.

Fiscal Equality

Australia is well on its way toward creating an educational system in which states make financial provision for schools on a roughly equal basis for schools of comparative size. This growing approximation to a relatively egalitarian fiscal base has been faciliated by the traditional finance at the state level, and by more recent Federal programs of large-scale aid -- general and special purpose -- administered through the Australian Schools Commission. That variations still exist in expenditures

and services among among schools in Australia goes without saying. Many wealthy communities provide, through voluntary gifts, school enrichment programs and other facilities not available to poorer communities. Until a thorough empirical analysis is made -- a study which would look in detail at a whole set of administrative, demographic, and locational variables -- Australian authorities themselves will not know the degree of variation in actual expenditure and service among the schools. On the other hand, compared to the state of the art in America, Australia is in fact down to fine tuning in the field of fiscal equality for education. De facto discrepancies among states and among schools in Australia are minor compared to the shameful de jure variations in the United States where school expenditures per pupil in one state may be three times those in another state. Nor is school revenue in Australia dependent as it is in most states in America on disparate local property values -- with all of the social injustices which that reality dictates. The situation is still so serious in the United States that the various grants made by the Federal government to states and to local school districts to aid educationally disadvantaged youngsters rarely compensate for the fiscal inequities inherent in state and local tax disparities.

Furthermore, while a number of American states, following the Serrano case in California, have undergone court-ordered equalization reforms in recent years, there is no direct and concerted effort to reduce interstate fiscal disparities in the field of education. And in only a few American states have intrastate equalization mandates really brought about true equity. The fact that Australia starts with a reasonably equitable fiscal base for its schools means that money

targeted for the disadvantaged results, in reality, in "positive discrimination" -- to use the felicitous Australian term. Frequently, in the United States, Federal money for the disadvantaged is a game of partial catch-up only.

It is difficult to believe that the ethical and constitutional heritage of the United States will allow the existing inequities in educational finance to continue indefinitely. And, economic and political forces are inexorably pushing the financing of American schools up the government ladder -- from local school districts to state and Federal jurisdictions. For reasons discussed below, this does not have to mean a loss of effective local control over fundamental educational decisions. But it does mean that state governments and the Federal government might well find nourishment in the Australian experience of moving toward fiscal fair-shares for schools.

Two Australian lessons, particularly, need to be internalized. The first is that federal concern must involve a continuing review of fiscal disparities among the nation's states and common schools. The Reagan Administration's "New Federalism" has renewed interest in interstate fiscal equalization that has had more prominance in the Australian context. In Australia, this is done by the Australian Schools Commission -- a Federal agency founded in 1974 and composed of public members as well as education interest group representatives. The Commission is charged to review the educational needs of the nation and to help insure that federal aid to the states -- general and special purpose -- is fairly and effectively distributed.

It is true that some observers believe that the Schools Commission's power and reputation may be on the wane. The enthusiasms and grant-in-

aid commitments that accompanied its creation have declined in recent months. Intergovernmental conflicts have increased. In retrospect, it seems clear that the Schools Commission has made its share of mistakes in inducing States and individual schools to identify local needs too superficially and expend "special-purpose" money too hastily. And yet, in terms of its basic mission, the Australian Schools Commission represents a commitment to national educational resource equity and the rational allocation of Federal money for education that goes far beyond what exists in the United States.

Something like the Australian Schools Commissions is certainly conceivable in the United States. America has a long history of educational data gathering and analysis at the Federal level. This after all was the sole original purpose of the U.S. Department (later "Bureau," later "Office," and now once again "Department") of Education when it was founded in 1867. But Federally collected data about educational finance has never achieved the comprehensiveness and the policy-relatedness of the studies and reports continuously developed by the Australian Schools Commission. This situation could well change in the future. Recently, the U.S. Congress has mandated a national study of school finance -- a study just getting underway as this essay is being written. If this ad hoc study were to become a permanent activity within the Department of Education, or a major function of the newly mandated Intergovernmental Council on Education, it could well become a functioning analogue to the Australian Schools Commission. Or a variant of the Australian Schools Commission could be part of the new national foundation for education that the Reagan Administration proposes instead of the Department of Education. It this were to happen, the American

counterpart could conduct annual reviews of the fiscal health of our nation's schools, and could provide information essential to achieving a more effective Federal role in compensating for state and local fiscal disparities and inadequacies. Federal programs that exacerbate fiscal inequities among the nation's schools could be trimmed and modified. New definitions of educational inequality could be developed, and new and refined aid formulas could be devised to insure state and local maintenance of effort while making more equitable the distribution of federal assistance.

It is to be hoped that if such a development occurs at the Federal level in the United States, special attention will be given to the perilous condition of school finance in many of America's largest cities. What has happened in the past months and years in New York, Chicago, Cleveland, and Detroit -- massive strikes, huge lay-offs of teachers, white flight, schools closed for lack of money, declining teachers' salaries, deferred maintenance and other manifestations of municipal overburden -- are simply symptoms of a cancerous condition which will become metastatic and fatal if not contained. Bold new fiscal programs involving both state and federal initiatives will be needed if urban schools are not to collapse, and if the educational and occupational needs of disadvantaged urban youngsters are to be served. Means of auditing the fiscal condition of public education in American cities on a continuing basis is a moral imperative in the years ahead.

Above all, perhaps, an American "Schools Commission" could highlight continuing interstate disparities and could lead the way ultimately toward a redistribution of national financial resources that would take into account the disparate wealth of states. Only then will children

in Mississippi and Arkansas enjoy the support of the level of educational resources provided in New York or Alaska.

Decentralized Policy Implementation

Apart from so-called "Impact Aid," and apart from the indirect affect upon education of a modest and a politically unstable program of revenue-sharing instituted under President Nixon, the United States Government has limited its aid to state and local education to a bewildering bevy of categorical grants -- what are referred to in the Australian context as "Special Purpose" grants. These grants target specific recipients and/or specific educational goals. For purposes of insuring conformance and accountability, Congress by law and Federal agencies by regulation have established elaborate administrative and reporting requirements which rest heavily upon the shoulders of state and local implementers.

Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act comes immediately to mind. In order to insure that only disadvantaged children receive the benfits of Title I funds, involved means are used to identify such children, to place them out of their normal class context for specified periods of the day, and to focus pedagogically on a limited number of basic skills (especially reading and arithmetic). In many cases, alas, this system is an example of what the late Wallace Sayre once referred to as "the triumph of technique over purpose."

It may well be, of course, that the substitution of more general aid would simply exacerbate local inequities -- that the poor, the handicapped, the non-English speaking, migrant children, and other targeted populations would get short shrift if states and local educational authorities could use federal money as they saw fit, or could interpret Federal mandates for equality in their own way. But few

would argue that categorical programs have avoided serious distortions program anomalies, and egregious administrative burdens of their own. In 1981, the U.S. Congress recognized this and began some categorical grant consolidation and deregulation. It is too early to tell whether the outcome will be beneficial.

During the 1960-1980 era Australia has moved in quite a different direction. In the field of aid to disadvantaged, Australia stresses "special-purpose" grants which give substantial latitude to grant implementers. The ultimate target is schools rather than individual pupils. As Jean Blackburn puts it, "Systems and schools rightly perceive in Australia that the program is theirs and that federal inputs are supportive rather than directive."

The net effects of the Australian emphasis upon local discretion in the spending of federal categorical funds is to reduce paper work to a minimum, to allow those closest to the scene to allocate resources according to locally perceived educational need, and to view education as a complex development of mind and affect rather than as a system of induced regimens in a few basic skills.

To many American educators, the system on the Australian side of the fence looks greener indeed. In the slightly idealized model just presented, it undoubtedly is. In reconsidering policy adjustments in its categorical programs in the years ahead, Americans should look carefully and favorably at the Australian experience with decentralized discretion in implementing categorical programs. In the process Americans should be aware of Australia's own concerns that its present system may in some cases be too permissive and that there may well be and increasing need "for a set of principles which go beyond description

of a particular action." And as Australia increasingly faces some of the social issues long known in the United States (e.g., ethnic and racial tensions, multilingualism, decaying parts of major cities), it may well find that its traditional dependence upon state-hierarchical and local-professional authority in education may have to be substantially modified. The role of the traditional state inspectorate in Australia has already been significantly weakened by the growing power of teachers' unions. Parents, local community leaders, and various ethnic interests may well become increasingly involved in the development of local school policy. Australia's traditional homogeneity may well have contributed to the trust implicit in political and bureaucratic centralization. Now, with increased immigration of Asians and a variety of South Europeans, Australia may have to adjust towards certain pluralistic models of education decision-making that mark contemporary American practice. This should not suggest, however, that the United States can afford to ignore positive lessons from the Australian experience -- particularly those lessons associated with the flexibility permitted in the local implementation of special-purpose education grants.

Education and Work

A number of recent studies on the relationship of American education to employment have come to a common conclusion: the articulation between the classroom and the work place is haphazard and grossly inadequate -- at least for children of the nation's poor. The majority of young people, using at least elementary literacy skills and individual aptitudes, find paid employment which brings varying degrees of satisfaction. But for large numbers of minority adolescents, facing increasing

competition from women, the elderly, and new migrants in the job market, schools are largely ineffective instruments for job training. In some large cities, half or more of Black and Hispanic youths are unemployed. Many of these unemployed young people with high school diplomas may lack the literacy, manual dexterity, and behavioral skills needed to find and hold a decent job.

By the middle 1960's and early 1970's, building upon a history of Federal youth programs that date back to the New Deal in the 1930's, the Federal government attempted to create a series of anti-poverty and job-training programs aimed in part at the needs of disadvantaged youth. Some of these were run out of the Department of Labor, some out of newly created anti-poverty agencies. In addition, the U.S. Office of Education under the leadership of Commissioner Sidney Marland attempted in the early 1970's to catalyze a major effort in American schools focused on "career education." But none of these efforts have had much impact upon hard-core youth unemployment. It is only within the past year that the Reagan Administration has put forward a Federal policy recommendation that purports to build an effective bridge between job-training and continued schooling. Even in this case, essential funding has been postponed, and no one knows how the projected programmatic liaison between the Department of Labor and the new Department of Education will in fact work out.

All one can say is that American education is faced with an increasing paradox. Under parental and student pressures, more lip-service is given than ever before to the job-training role of schools. Yet most vocational tracking in the U.S. schools shows little in the way of job-finding and job-holding success. On-the-job training by industry is increasing because of the inadequacies of vocational

preparation in the schools. State and local educational programs are still far removed from the employment goals, job-training activities, and career-oriented educational initiatives of the Federal government.

Australia elevated the transition of youth to work as a top policy priority in recent years. Americans could learn from Australian projects focussed on minorities in their eastern cities. Australia has a much earlier school-leaving age for those who do not desire post-secondary education. The U.S. should study carefully how the Australian economy absorbs and trains these 15-year olds. Apprentice programs in both countries could be explored for comparative advantages or disadvantages.

Issues of Diversity

Aid to Non-Public Schools

At first blush it would appear that the United States has little to learn from Australia about aid to non-public schools. In Australia, state aid to non-public schools is copious. In the United States it is meagre. In Australia, there are legal sanctions for the teaching and on-site promotion of religion in public schools. In America, such teaching is constitutionally proscribed. In Australia, politicians tend to decide church-state issues in education. In America, court decisions tend to predominate in this tangled field.

On the other hand, in the United States there are at work powerful social, economic, and political forces which are attempting to extend educational options to parents and young people and to develop schemes to increase public support for non-public schools. Federal legislative initiatives to give tax credits to parents of children attending non-public schools have to date not prevailed. But the volcano still

rumbles, as evidenced by the 1982 tuition tax credit proposal of the Reagan Administration. And recent school-voucher proposals in California are symptoms of a wide-spread public disenchantment with the common school and an extended search to find ways of providing public subsidies for private (including sectarian) education. As the largely Catholic Hispanic population (notably Caribbean and Mexican) increase their percentage of American school-age population, factors of language, culture, and religion will be likely to exacerbate current pressures for public aid to private education. White flight from desegregation pressures in major metropolitan areas pushes in the same direction.

In this developing context, Australian experience with aid to non-public schools may become increasingly relevant to American policy deliberations. The very fact that U.S. Supreme Court decisions in the church-state field have become an almost chaotic bramble of judicial reasoning may in itself give the more overtly political arms of the American polity greater scope. It is certainly conceivable that rising public pressures against the public schools (especially in major urban centers) may well force the common schools, as a matter of survival, to liberalize their notions of what kinds of educational diversities might be permitted within the common-school systems. Legislation, even constitutional amendments, may emerge in the years ahead which will bring the American educational model far closer to Australian reality than most savants in the United States would presently predict.

Existing rising tensions in Australia over the appropriate allocation of government funds to public and private schools (witness the paper by I.K.F. Birch included in this volume) should serve as a warning that Australia is not united on public aid to sectarian

schools. But political configurations being what they are, fairly liberal policy accommodations to aid private educational interests in Australia are bound to continue for some time to come. A careful review of Australian experience in this complex area might well save the United States from doctrinaire foolishness as it threads its way through its own constitutional thicket, and as it places progressively greater burdens on political as distinct from judicial instruments of conflict resolution. For example, it may be far sounder for the United States to deal up front with the needed resources of private schools, especially those counterparts to Australian religious schools that bear a heavy burden of disadvantaged pupils, than to back into such financing through the potentially regressive devise of tax credits. The papers in this volume by Sherman and Birch address all of these issues in a comparative policy context.

Educating the Gifted

Miriam Goldberg's sensitive and perceptive look at the education of gifted children in the United States and Australia suggests that both nations are struggling to overcome past policy gyrations, value uncertainties, and a range of technical and professional disagreements and ambiguities. In both nations, aid to the gifted has run in intermittent cycles as the public has shifted from an egalitarian to need-for-excellence moods. Although America could certainly profit from some of the specific Australian conceptualizations and experiments in the field of the education of the gifted (perhaps especially the idea of Special Interest Centers, and the experience of selected schools established for young people gifted in foreign language, math and music), the main contribution of the Goldberg analysis to American

educational policy deliberations in the years ahead is in its implicit and explicit plea that the two countries get their heads on straight. She points in both nations to the dearth of support for research on the gifted/talented, to ambivalent attitudes toward society's need for both excellence and egalitarianism, to unresolved questions about appropriate "talent areas," and appropriate standards for determining giftedness/talent to unresolved issues of criteria for selection (i.e., "potential" v. "achievement"), to uncertainties about appropriate benchmarks for judging the effectiveness of programs, to questions of organization for content development and instruction, and to the all-important issues associated with questions of the appropriate staffing of programs for the gifted/talented.

Miriam Goldberg is especially critical of the inadequate attempts of both the United States and Australia to identify and cultivate talent among disadvantaged populations. In consequence, all too many special educational programs for the gifted/talented reinforce traditional class and caste distinctions. The answer is not to close off special opportunities for the truly gifted (they are precious and essential seed corn of both survival and delight in every modern society), but to explore more sophisticated means for identifying unusual gifts and talents within traditionally underprivileged or disadvantaged segments of society.

Rural (Distance) Education

Australia has been far more innovative in purveying educational services to rural areas than has the United States. Sparse populations and great distances across arid landscapes have undoubtedly been goads to innovation. In any case, for years Australia has pioneeered the use

of radio in what they call "distance" education, and they are presently experimenting with various video technologies.

In isolated sections of America (e.g. in sections of Alaska), technology is being increasingly used to implement and supplement distance education. The state of South Carolina has constructed an educational T.V. grid which reaches into virtually every school in the state -- urban and rural. The Australians, however, have put considerable effort into software for rural populations and seem to have several approaches of use to the United States. An intensive effort that combines new U.S. developments in hardware (discs, tapes, computers, etc.) with an Australian know-how of software has promise for major improvements in educational services for isolated populations. At the post-secondary level, Australian efforts in external degrees and off-campus materials and techniques merits a close examination. The geographic isolation of Australia has caused a higher priority for rural isolated educational approaches.

Professional Development

There is probably no aspect of American educational policy during the past twenty-five years that has been more confused conceptually, more plagued by false starts, and more beleagured financially than the professional development of educators. Yet, an almost prima facie case can be made for the proposition that without adequate provision for the professional development of educators -- pre-entry and mid-career -- there is little hope for a major improvement in pupil learning.

Federal policies designed to promote professional development have wandered all over the map:

-- Post-sputnik attempts to increase teacher competence in specific

"national security"fields like science, math, and foreign language,

-- Federally funded graduate fellowships during the teacher shortage of the 1960's designed to induce able young people to enter the professions,

-- Ill-starred initiatives of the Education Professions Development Act (like the "Triple T" experiment which tried to enhance community and liberal-arts involvement in improving the quality of teacher training) which foundered in conceptual ambiguities and growing congressional skepticism and hostility,

-- Various programs designed to improve teacher competence in selected settings (e.g., Teacher Corps, bilingual programs, Experimental Schools),

-- The Federal encouragement of teacher-run teachers centers established to improve the mid-career professional development of practicing teachers,

— R & D Centers, Regional Laboratories, and NIE-sponsored dissemination services directed at improving pedagogic competence,

-- The 1981 block grant legislation that eliminated specific federal categories and left the whole issue up to state and local authorities.

Funding for these important initiatives has frequently been sparse and short-lived. Competing concepts of professional development have had their own supporting interest groups which have often warred against one another. Evaluation of professional development has been primitive. Teacher and teacher-union resistance to Federally sponsored professional development programs has often been stubborn.

The story is a little better at the State level. There has been a long history of dissatisfaction with teacher training in America. The

writings of concerned observers like Conant and Koerner have stimulated attempts to improve the professional development of educators. The National Council for the Accrediting of Teacher Education was originally founded for this purpose. An increasing number of states are presently experimenting with various concepts and devices to assess and improve teacher competency. But the results to date have been desultory and inconclusive. And American attempts at the professional development of school administrators and supervisors have on the whole been lack-lustre and sporatic where they have existed at all. This may now be changing as at least a few graduate schools of education are beginning to focus attention on problems of school-site leadership. The results of these experiments, however, will not be known for years. And, in the meantime, school administration is bound to involve skills, attitudes, and knowledge far beyond those possessed by most current incumbents.

Given this gyration in American policy, a follow-up to this comparative project with Australia could be used to assess the strengths and weaknesses of some of our numerous strategies. The Australian approach could provide a perspective that involves fewer short-lived categorical programs. Moreover, the bulk of U.S. inservice training costs are incurred by local school districts that provide salary increments for college credits beyond the B.A. degree. Comparisons of these local approaches with Australian state policies for inservice appears to be a promising venture.

Issues of Control

For students of comparative institutions, the papers in the U.S.-Australia Education Policy Project that deal with governance and control

are of intrinsic interest. But their implications for future educational policy deliberations in either country are far from clear. American political scientists a generation ago went through a period of romantic affinity for the Westminster Parliamentary model with its disciplined parties, professional bureaucrats, and cabinet government. The belief was that the Westminster system had an important message for a nation like the United States where checks and balances, shared powers, and party-less parties often seemingly defied the capacity of the nation to govern itself. A few modest instruments of coherence may have emerged in the Federal government of the United States as a result of such academic and political speculations (the Congressional Budget Office, the National Security Council, the Domestic Council come to mind), but American parties have weakened in the past quarter-century, and the fragmentary effects of single-interest groups have increased. In any case, complex Federal systems do not easily square with a Westminster parliamentary model. This is especially true in a field like education where long constitutional traditions have placed educational control in state, local, or private hands.

If one adds to all this the inevitable differances in demography, political cultures, and social habits between the United States and Australia, a series of cogent lessons to be drawn from comparative descriptions of the structure and process of educational control within the two countries do not come trippingly to the mind. A few exceptions have been noted earlier in this essay -- notably the work of the Australian Schools Commission, and the Australian propensity to allow for considerable professional discretion at the local level in administering school programs initiated at higher levels. Both of these seem to point in con-

structive directions vis-a-vis the pathologies of current American practice. But the possibility of actually transferring such Australian examples to the American scene is at best uncertain. The idea of a Schools Commission type central planning and allocation instrument at the Federal level might well be anathema to the Reagan Administration. On the other hand, those holding Reagan-type values would almost certainly be comfortable with the Australian propensity to maximize State and local discretion in the orchestration of Federal categorical programs.

Whatever the uncertainties in attempting to divine specific policy lessons from comparisons of the instruments of educational control in the United States and Australia, the Education Policy Project reports on governance are laced with intriguing innuendos. Among other things, they suggest that there are linear shifts in traditional loci of decision-making and influence in both nations -- shifts that in some cases are exacerbating and in other cases minimizing the operational and assumptive differences between the two countries. Both Murphy and Harmon, for example, believe that the traditional power of centralized professionals at the state level in Australia is weakening and that both Federal officials and local school administrators are growing in influence and control; whereas, in the United States, local authority over schools is being lost to more centralized State and Federal systems. As Murphy puts it, "The power of the center seems to be eroding and, ironically, the typical Australian teacher and principal may now have more freedom and authority over administrative and curricular matters than their counterparts in America...State officials now look both up and down at influential new actors."

Furthermore, Project reports document the substantial increase in Federal financial aid to schools in both countries in recent years. But, as Murphy points out, this has meant in the United States a far more detailed regulatory control by the Federal government over local school programs than is the case in Australia. As noted earlier in this essay, even special-purpose Federal grants in Australia tend to allow a far greater degree of local discretion in implementation than is the case in the United States. And, of course, most Federal money for schooling in Australia is general rather than specific in nature.

Murphy also reminds us that because of constitutional and political traditions, elected officials in Australia have traditionally maintained a far greater arms-length relationship to schools than has been the case in the United States, and that public bureaucracies at all levels of government have tended to be more autonomous (i.e., more independent of direct political influence) in Australia than in America. But Murphy sees signs in Australia of a movement toward the American model -- that is, signs of increasing involvement of elected officials in schools policy and program management. There does not, however, appear to be a contrary tendency in America where interest groups, citizen councils, and "new-breed professionals" (e.g., lawyers, policy analysts, and social scientists) continue to have far more influence on educational policy and governance than is the case Down Under.

Out of all this, Murphy constructs a stunning summary paragraph which illustrates the competing tendencies in the two nations.

> Australia's centralized system fostered equality of school funding (more than in America), and professional, efficient, stable, coordinating operations that generally met uniform standards. But it also promoted a closed, insulated, inbred bureaucracy, and it stifled diversity, choice and responsiveness -- thus leading to some of the

current pressures for decentralization. America's centralized system fostered greater diversity, parental involvement, and openness. But it also promoted inequality, parochialism, fragmentation, and segregation, thus leading to some of the pressures for greater centralization. This pattern suggests that no solution is stable over time as long as competing values are at play -- which seems even more likely in the future.

Perhaps one caveat is in order, a caveat deriving from the ambiguity of the term "centralization." In America, the increase in Federal intervention in the control of local school activities has had the affect of adding layers of authority without providing the kind of policy and program coordination that centralization normally implies. Hundreds of educational programs are carried out by more than two-score separate departments and agencies. A number of Federal courts and a myriad Congressional sub-committees are a part of the kaleidoscopic control system. This is certainly evidence of a complex Federal-level involvement in school matters. But is it "centralization"? It can easily be argued that what is emerging in America is not greater centralization but a shifting pattern of educational control that is so convoluted, so fragmented, so litigious, so overlapping, so interdependent, and yet so vital, as to force major educational actors to think less about formal structure and the locus of ultimate authority and far more about ad hoc catalysis and the eclectic synthesis of disparate centers of power and influence. To speak of the waning or growing power of "professionals" in American education today is to indulge a massive anachronism. The truly successful professional bureaucrat or educational administrator or teacher in the United states is marked not so much by substantive expertise in the teaching and learning professions as by value conviction and brokerage skills -- the capacity to orchestrate the swirling interests and competing values

that play on education from above, below, and from all sides. It is true that past professional autonomies and immunities in American education have declined if by those we mean school-board-manipulating, school-personnel-managing superintendents, order-giving principals, or classroom dominating individual teachers. But what has taken their place are not tight systems of centralized control at the State and Federal level, but vast and complex fields-of-force in which a myriad political, bureaucratic, economic, juridical, group-interest, and community forces jostle and collaborate.

The real lessons of the U.S.-Australia Education Policy Project is not that there are clear trends in the shifting loci of educational authority and control in either country, but that in the immortal words of Jimmy Durante, "everybody wants to get into the act." This suggests that future policy making in both countries will be less an answer to the now archaic question "Who is in charge?" and more an answer to the central question for the future of education in both countries, "How can the unstable and complex machinery of educational policy-making in both countries be used to improve the learning of youngsters?"

Summary and Conclusions

This essay has tried to suggest that future educational policy deliberations in the United States might well profit from selected Australian experiences and from the kinds of general issues raised and discussed in the comparative Education Policy Project itself:

--In view of persistent fiscal inequalities in American education, useful lessons for the future may be learned from the model of the Australian Schools Commission.

--In the light of the U.S. Federal government's propensity to

over-regulate the implementation of categorical educational programs, Australia's practice of allowing substantial school discretion in implementing special-purpose grants-in-aid might well be reviewed for ways out of America's present regulatory morass.

--Australian experiments with Turks in Melbourne and Lebanese in Sydney may have implications for articulating education-and-work programs among minorities and non-English speaking populations in the United States.

--The history of church-state relations in Australian and American schooling suggests that one nation may learn little from the other in this tangled area. On the other hand, vibrant forces in American life may force church-state decisions progressively away from the courts and into politics. If this happens, a review of Australian experience may be useful indeed.

--Both America and Australia have had cyclical love-hate relations with the education of gifted children. Both nations need to get their value premises straight and to reduce the present ambiguities in definition, goals, and operating procedures. How to identify the individually gifted among disadvantaged groups may be a particular challenge in the years ahead.

--Australia pioneered the use of radio in "distance" education. Australia has a reputation for developing excellent software in its "external" educational programs. America leads in new instructional technology. The sharing of relative expertise between the two countries may well profit the educational systems of both.

--Professional development of educators has a sorry history in the United States and relies on ephemeral categorical grants. The Australian

in-service system is noteworthy for high quality in rural areas and a stable funding system.

--In the area of governance and control, the real lesson of the U.S.-Australia Education Policy Project is not that there are clear trends towards "centralization" or "decentralization" in either nation, but that increasingly "everyone wants to get into the act." This leaves as an ultimate question: "How can the unstable and complex machinery of educational policy-making in both countries be used to improve the learning of youngsters?"